'Safety in Fiction: Recreational Strategies for Readers and Audiences in the Work of John Marston.'

Patrick Buckridge

The London of the late 1590s and early 1600s was a place in which satiric writing, whether for publication or for the stage, was anything but a safe pursuit. The death of Burghley in 1598, Elizabeth's increasing infirmity, and the Essex Rebellion of 1601 were just some of the factors motivating the government's heightened intolerance of public criticism of its institutions or policies. Nashe's imprisonment for his part in the *Isle of Dogs*, banned and suppressed after one performance in 1597, and the prosecution of Jonson and Chapman (Marston escaped unpunished) for their part in the writing of *Eastward-Hoe* in 1603, might be taken as chronological boundary markers for this late-Elizabethan burst of political sensitivity. At its midpoint we find Elizabeth's famous (and astute) remark on the performances of Shakespeare's *Richard II* mounted by Essex supporters in the weeks prior to the Rebellion ('I am Richard the Second, know ye not that?'); and by the 'Bishops' Bonfire' of the previous year (1599), in which several recently published books were banned, for somewhat obscure reasons, and copies of them seized from the booksellers and burned in the churchyard of Paul's by episcopal decree.

Among the items destroyed in that unusually dramatic act of suppression were Marston's two collections of verse satires, *Certaine Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie* (both 1598) and his verse epyllion, *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image*, written in the manner of *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* (both of which were also burned). Since the Bishops' specific objections to the books were not explained it would be difficult to substantiate John Peter's eccentric view of the bonfire as 'an act of literary criticism'! Clearly Marston was deemed to have overstepped the mark; yet no additional penalty seems to have been imposed, a fact that may suggest that he had done enough to satisfy a watchful and unforgiving censorship that he represented no real threat to the nation.

One of the ways in which Marston may have sought to discourage any perception of himself as a genuinely 'dangerous' author, while at the same time projecting an image of himself as a fearless scourge of public and private vice, was by adopting a very deliberate strategy for directing the general readers' response to his satiric writing along pleasurable, useful and (from the poet/playwright's point of view) politically safe channels.

The surprising autonomy and diversity of reading have become something of a commonplace in the last few years; indeed the main emphasis in much recent work has been on the mobility and unpredictability of popular reading practices. Marston, I think, recognised the 'rebellious and vagabond' nature of reading, and adopted measures designed to supervise and regulate it from within by writing, at least partly in response to cruder and more coercive attempts to control it from without by censorship, prohibition and suppression.

Relevant to the kind of analysis proposed here are Annabel Patterson's recent discussions of a hermeneutics of 'reading between the lines' and of a poetics of 'writing between the lines', as both of these emerged in the censoring society of Renaissance

England.³ Patterson is interested in the kinds of reading and writing that enabled the systematic concealment of politically sensitive or subversive meanings in literature. Marston, I want to suggest, was engaged in something like the antithesis of this project, devising ways of reading and writing for poetry and drama that would direct the reader's or spectator's attention away from the very possibility of 'real-world' applications and correspondences, away from the joys of allusion-hunting, puzzle-solving and codebreaking, towards an alternative form of literary pleasure and profit. This alternative, in a word, was 'recreation'.

Marston's project makes its most explicit appearance in the postscript to the *Scourge of Villanie*, addressed 'to him that hath perused me', to whom he complains pessimistically that he will be

much, much injuried by two sorts of readers: the one being ignorant, not knowing the nature of a Satyre, (which is under fained private names, to note generall vices,) will needes wrest each fained name to a private unfained person. The other too subtile, bearing a private malice to some greater personage then hee dare in his owne person seeme to maligne, will strive by a forced application of my generall reproofes to broach his private hatred.⁴

There is a bit more here than the satirist's conventionally disingenuous disclaimer. This is a serious analysis (whether entirely disinterested or not) of why and how people 'misread' satire, and of what that misreading involves. The 'wrong' way to read satire, whether motivated by ignorance or malice, is to keep trying to 'decode' the parade of social and moral types into a series of thinly veiled representations of real individuals. By implication, then, there is a 'right' way to read satire - and perhaps other kinds of literature too - and we might infer that this right way must contain within it a recognition of the essential *virtuality* or *fictionality* of the writing, a refusal to translate the feigned into the unfeigned.

To increase the chances of his readers behaving in a properly non-injurious manner, Marston used a combined propaedeutic strategy that many a pedagogue has used since: demonstration, explanation and training. In the *Scourge of Villanie*, these all take place within the first ten pages in a remarkable variety of prefatory pieces. The first three - a dedication 'To his most esteemed, and best beloued Selfe', a blustering presentation 'To Detraction', and a long ranting welcome to his 'entirely unworthy readers' (and to a select few worthy ones) - demonstrate the range of styles and attitudes that will characterise the 'satyr/satirist' in the ensuing volume. The fifth piece, an invocation to 'ingenuous [ingenious] Melancholy', extends the range a little further.

Explanation and commentary are provided in the fourth piece, a prose Preface addressed 'To those that seeme iudiciall perusers', in which Marston rejects the metrical irregularity and verbal obscurity commonly regarded as decorous for satire. Arguing (with great perspicacity, as it happens) that such expectations are based on historical ignorance - that Persius and Juvenal, like Chaucer, were neither rough nor obscure (dark) to their original readers - Marston undertakes not to 'delude your sight with mists', but to observe only the 'peculiar kind of speech [suitable] for a Satyres lips' which he has already demonstrated in the previous pieces.

The final step in the propaedeutic process - training - is supplied by the first satire, 'Fronti nulla fides', and Marston is fairly explicit about its special function and status in the volume. In the prose Preface he claims that he wrote the first satire 'in some places too obscure, in all places misliking me', and that he did it to please the 'unseasond

pallate' of those who think all satires must be 'palpable darke, and so rough writ that the hearing of them read would set a man's teeth on edge'. The whole satire, in other words, is written to encourage and even cater for a certain kind of 'bad reading'. Such a reader is personified in 'Torquatus' who 'understands not the least part of it', but who will nonetheless 'vouchsafe it some of his new-minted Epithets, (as *Reall, Intrinsecate, Delphicke*)'. The perceptive reader is warned about the imposture in the Preface, and it is confirmed at the end of the satire itself when the speaker openly abandons his adopted style:

Tut, hang up *Hieroglyphickes*. Ile not faine Wresting my humor, from his native straine. (*SV* 1, 78-79)

Questions might arise as to whether Marston really succeeded in differentiating this satire from the others stylistically, but there can be little question that he intended to. The word 'hieroglyphics' (sacred inscriptions) makes it clear that one of the vices of style he wanted to represent (perhaps parody) was precisely that 'palpable darkness' he complains of in the Preface. Another is presumably the excessive irregularity or 'roughness' that 'sets a man's teeth on edge'. Both are explained, exemplified and rejected by the satirist in these first few pages of verse and prose, and the expectation is clearly that intelligent readers will as a consequence be better equipped to avoid them in their reading of the remainder of the volume.

So much for bad reading. Before going on to inquire how 'good reading' might be defined in the *Scourge* and elsewhere, it will be helpful to glance at Marston's first volume of verse, which had appeared earlier in the same year, 1598. It contained 'The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image', an erotic epyllion in the Ovidian mode, followed by a linking poem - 'The Authour in prayse of his Precedent Poem' - and then a sequence of five verse satires. The propaedeutically arranged opening gambits of the *Scourge* suggest the possibility of a similar pattern in this earlier volume, a possibility which is given extra weight by Marston's retrospective insistence, in the sixth satire of the *Scourge*, that his motive for writing the erotic poem was a reforming one:

Hence thou misiudging Censor, know I wrot Those idle rimes to note the odious spot And blemish that deforms the lineaments Of moderne Poesies habiliments. (SV 6, 23-6)

Some scepticism has been directed at this belated claim of Marston's over the years⁵. The fact that a similar claim is made in the linking poem in the *Pigmalion* volume itself would put the issue out of doubt, were it not for the possibility of a lost earlier edition which may have lacked this poem.⁶ But the earliest edition we have certainly seems, as it stands, to place *Pigmalion* in the same kind of ironic relationship to the satires that follow it as the first satire of the *Scourge* bears to the remaining satires in that volume.

With this 'meta-poetic' function in mind, it is not difficult to observe a metaphoric duality emerging closely analogous to the literal duality in the types of 'injurious' readers Marston complains of in the postscript to the *Scourge*: the ignorant and the malicious, both of whom, for different motives, insist on reading his satire as a thinly veiled commentary on living individuals rather than what it purports (somewhat unconvincingly) to be, namely a fictional 'satiric satyr' called 'W. Kinsayder' lambasting

a crowd of fictional fools and knaves with names like Luscus, Tuscus, Tubrio, Phrigio, and Suffenus.

In telling the tale of Pygmalion's love for the statue he had created, and of its miraculous transmutation into a real woman, Marston drops a number of 'hints' to the effect that a 'true' reading of the tale, in his treatment of it, would see the miraculous metamorphosis as a thinly veiled metaphor for a successful seduction in which stony resistance is melted to willing compliance by the lover's perseverance. There are at least three points in the narrative where this figurative reading of the tale is implanted by narratorial inclusions such as the following:

O wonder not to heare me thus relate,
And say to flesh transformed was a stone.
Had I my love in such a wished state
As was afforded to *Pigmalion*,
Though flinty hard, of her you soone should see
As strange a transformation wrought by mee. (*Poems* p.59)

Other devices suggest and support this same 'libertine' coding: the poet's invocation to his own mistress, for example; and the verses that follow the epyllion (quoted below from the 1598 edition) also press the same figurative reading upon the reader. The Author, 'in prayse of his precedent poem', recalls:

And in the end, (the end of love I wot)

Pigmalion hath a jolly boy begot.

So Labeo did complain his love was stone

Obdurate, flinty, so relentlesse none;

Yet Lynceus knowes, that in the end of this,

He wrought as strange a metamorphosis. (Poems pp.65-66)

Whether 'Labeo' and 'Lynceus' refer to real individuals or not, ⁷ the action referred to is obviously of the seduction type, the 'metamorphosis' a mere change of mind, and the effect upon the poem as narrative to deprive it of its fictional autonomy. The worldly cynicism behind such a reading can be likened, perhaps, to the more sophisticated of the two 'injurious' types of readers complained of in the *Scourge*. The other, simpler type of injurious reader is also represented here. They are those the Author has in mind when he boasts that his poem's 'Salaminian titillations' will have 'tickled up our lewd Priapians' ('lewd' perhaps in the double sense of 'lecherous' and 'ignorant'). Just as their reading of satire involves no deliberate 'translation' but simple ignorance of the nature of satiric fiction, so their reading of the epyllion involves a naively direct and unmediated relation to its sensuous descriptive language.

This duality of 'bad reading' is inscribed yet again in the narrative proper. The progress of Pygmalion's infatuation with the statue prior to its metamorphosis falls into two distinct phases. The first phase does not involve any settled delusion about the statue as a whole entity, but rather a series of erotic responses to the beauties of its contstituent parts: 'O what alluring beauties he descries/In each part of his faire imagery!' (*Poems* p.52). There is a slowly growing illusion of life in Pygmalion's imagination, but the freedom with which he inspects the statue's secret parts, 'not letting overslip/One parcell of his curious workmanship' (*Poems* p.53), indicates the limits of that illusion. The

fetishistic ambience of this first phase is precisely conveyed by the first of three stanzalength religious similes:

Who ever saw the subtile City-dame
In sacred church, when her pure thoughts should pray,
Peire through her fingers, so to hide her shame,
When that her eye, her mind would faine bewray.
So would he view, and winke, and view againe,
A chaster thought could not his eyes retaine. (*Poems* p.54)

The second phase of Pygmalion's infatuation places him firmely in the grip of the illusion that the statue is a real woman. For the first time he refers it as 'her', salutes her, and generally treats her as an object of courtly seduction rather than a sexual fetish. The distinctive character of this phase is expressed in another religious simile:

Looke how the peevish Papists crouch, and kneele To some dum Idoll with their offering, As if a senceles carved stone could feele The ardor of their bootles chattering, So fond he was, and earnest in his sute To his remorsles Image, dum and mute. (*Poems* p.55)

The connotations of these two similes are strongly sectarian. The city dame with her 'pure thoughts' signifies Puritan disrespect for sacred symbols almost as clearly as the 'peevish Papists' signify Romish superstition. It is no coincidence that an exactly analogous distinction should be drawn in the second satire of the *Scourge* with reference to the Eucharist: the Cambridge Puritans are said to 'take the simbole up/As slovenly, as carelesse Courtiers slup/Their mutton gruell', while the papists, by contrast, 'Adore wheat dough as reall deitie' (*Poems* pp.108-9). Both are aberrant forms of worship in relation to the Anglican 'via media', but they are different aberrations. The same is true of the aberrant forms of reading with which they are (roughly) homologous.

If the two stages of Pygmalion's infatuation can be read as metaphors for the aberrant or 'injurious' kinds of reading Marston identified for satire, the question arises as to what, in his view, constituted a correct or appropriate type of reading, and how he might encourage readers to practise it. A metaphorical answer to the first question is implied, schematically enough, in a third stanza-length religious simile used to define the next phase of his changing relationship with the statue. This occurs at the moment of literal transformation, when the marble statue actually becomes a real woman of flesh and blood:

Doe but conceive a Mothers passing gladness,
(After that death her only sonne hath seazed
And overwhelmed her soule with endlesse sadnes)
When that she sees him gin for to be raised
From out his deadly swoune to life againe:
Such joy Pigmalion feeles in every vaine. (*Poems*, p.59)

'O wonder not', advises the libertine narrator in the next stanza but one; but in fact 'wonder' is precisely the right response to a miraculous transformation, just as it is to a

miraculous resurrection. The narrator's advice is wrong, and derives from a reading pathology of a kind already identified: an inability or refusal to respect the integrity of poetic fiction. Respecting the fiction seems to mean something fairly close to 'suspending disbelief'; and it finds appropriate metaphors in the miraculous changes depicted in this part of the narrative, and in the fulfilment and fertility of the final union of Pygmalion and Galatea.

The blend of religious and sexual imagery in Marston's evocation of 'good reading' - it is compared, in effect, with both the Eucharist (considered as a symbol) and with sexual virility - occurs elsewhere in the *Pigmalion* volume, in the fourth of the *Certaine Satyres*. 'Reactio', as the title suggests, is written in reaction to Joseph Hall's attacks on recent and contemporary poets, including Daniel, Drayton and the *Mirror for Magistrates* (*Poems*, p.83). Halfway through his defence of the poets he inserts a defence and exposition of 'fiction' itself:

For tell me *Crittick*, is not *Fiction*The Soule of Poesies invention?
Is't not the forme? the spirit? and the essence?
The life? And the essential difference?
Which *omni*, *semper*, *soli*, doth agree
To heavenly discended Poesie?
Thy wit God comfort mad Chirurgion
What, make so dangerous an Incision?
At first dash whip away the instrument
Of Poets Procreation? fie ignorant!
When as the soule, and vital blood doth rest
And hath in Fiction onely interest?
What Satyre! sucke the soule from Poesie
And leave him spritles? o impiety! (*Poems*, p.84)

Marston is following Sidney in taking the essence of 'right' poetry (as distinct from 'divine' and 'philosophical' poetry) to be 'fiction' - the representation, in Sidney's words, of 'what may be and should be' rather than 'what is, hath been, or shall be'. True poets, by their gift of feigning or imitation, create 'another nature', a 'golden world'. Furthermore, they not only 'make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but...bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses'. 8

On this last claim - the poet's power to 'make many Cyruses', that is, to promote heroic virtue in the world - Marston was somewhat less sanguine than Sidney. Several passages in the *Scourge* reveal his skepticism about the possibility of moral change without the intervention of divine Grace. The most detailed exposition is in the fourth satire, where he explicitly rejects Stoic, Aristotelian and Scholastic doctrines concerning the behavioral bases of moral change in favor of a near-Calvinist insistence on necessary Grace.

In earnest thus, it is a sacred cure
To salve the soules dread woundes; Omnipotent
That nature is, that cures the impotent,
Even in a moment; Sure Grace is infus'd
By divine favour, not by actions us'd (SV 4, 114-120)

Several critics have acknowledged the Calvinistic fideism implicit in the position that right conduct is only possible with the help of Grace; Caputi has even suggested a serious inconsistency with Marston's ridicule of the Puritans elsewhere in the satires. But this ignores the markedly Calvinistic character of certain of the Lambeth Articles of the Church of England approved by Whitgift in the 1590s; indeed Whitgift himself, as Archbishop of Canterbury (1583-1604), was a noted persecutor of the Puritans.

Marston's doctrinal self-positioning, in short, is technically Anglican (as befits one who was later to enter the Church). But the emphasis he places on necessary Grace creates a dilemma for the satirist, whose scope for moral correction - the traditional defence of satiric incivility since Antiquity - is theoretically limited by such a doctrine. Where other Elizabethan satirists were content simply to imitate the classical models willy-nilly, Marston seems to have thought his way through the dilemma very carefully. If he could not, in good conscience, ignore the limits on human corrigibility set by his own Protestant theology, a different rationale was needed for moral satire, which might well have implications for its practice.

The alternative rationale, worked out in a number of the poems in both volumes, seems to be that if satire cannot reliably function as a moral corrective it can at least work as a form of *recreation*. Recreation, in its highest function, was highly recommended by educational writers like Elyot, Ascham and Mulcaster and by scholars like Harington, Burton, Walton and Fuller, not only as a source of physical pleasure and relaxation, but as a source of spiritual solace and refreshment. The latter benefit was related to its 'memorial' effect: the temporary freedom and 'bliss' associated with recreation could be seen as a fleeting shadow of the substantial freedom and bliss the soul possessed before its descent into fallen nature. It was in that sense, in Bishop Fuller's words, a 'second creation ... the breathing of the soul'. (In Marston's distinctly Anglican mode of binary thinking - a mode in which 'shadows', though inferior to 'substances', are recognised and respected for the thing they reflect or symbolise - the soul's recreation shadows its original creation just as the eucharistic symbol shadows the substance of Christ's body, and poetic fiction shadows the creative power of God).

Satiric poetry could attempt to be 'recreative' in the higher spiritual sense in two complementary ways: by playing a game with the reader, in the hope that the pleasure of the game will engender some spark of spiritual awareness in the reader; and by expressing the truth about the soul's divinity more seriously and directly to the 'diviner wits' capable of receiving the message. Marston makes no bones about the deep dichotomy in his envisaged readership. Eighty lines of preliminary insults to the 'utterly unworthy readers' of the *Scourge* are followed by a sixteen line eulogy to those 'celestiall soules, /Whose free-borne mindes no kennel thought controules', and who can be trusted to understand his methods:

To you how cheerfully my poeme runnes. (*Poems*, pp.98-99)

For the unworthy, carnal and ignorant majority, however, the first method - game-playing - is the only one worth pursuing:

The poore soules better part so feeble is,

.

That shadowes by odde chaunce somtimes are got,

But o the substance is respected not. (SV 9, 235-8)

The game is the largely vicarious one of satiric abuse, a spectator sport at which Marston's older contemporary Thomas Nashe was the undisputed champion; and Marston has devised a satiric style for the occasion in which, having first given his readers some hints about how *not* to read his writing, he proceeds to stage a series of lively bouts for them featuring 'W.Kinsayder', satyr-satirist extraordinary, against all comers.

Here ends my rage, though angry brow was bent, Yet have I sung in sporting merriment. (SV 9, 239-40)

Simultaneously, in the intervals between diatribes, serious reflections on virtue, Grace and poetry are articulated for the edification - that is, the higher recreation - of the few.

Recreational Drama

Given the breadth and seriousness of the satiric theory implicit in Marston's non-dramatic verse, it would be surprising if it did not make its presence felt in his writing for the theatre, especially since the theory both predicated and produced a dramatic and playful style in his verse satires. Within the wider Humanist discourse of recreation the characteristic abuses of play were much discussed: 'addiction' and 'ulterior motive' emerge as the most common categories of abuse, both of them impediments to 'honest recreation'. Marston took steps to avoid precisely these abuses in the *Scourge* - that is, his propaedeutic moves to exclude allegorical reading were also moves that optimised the 'honest recreation' of the reading experience - and the theatre, with its ephemeral scripts and boy actors, provided conditions that were not especially conducive to either of the impediments described in the non-dramatic writing.

The preliminary work on the reader was thus perhaps almost unnecessary in the theatre, where the conditions themselves worked against both addiction and ulteriority on the part of the audience. But Marston was not one to leave things entirely to chance, and in his earlier plays especially, there are clear indications of a new, more specifically 'recreative' set of principles governing both rhetoric and dramatic structure. Space will not permit comments on more than one of Marston's plays, and it seems natural to select *Antonio and Mellida* (1599-1601) for this purpose, as it is the earliest of the 'sole author' plays: both *Histriomastix* and *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, though probably earlier, seem most likely to be revisions by Marston of old plays by other hands.

Antonio and Mellida was written, probably in 1599, for performance by Paul's Boys. ¹² One important resource for developing a playful or recreative dramaturgy must always have been the gap between actor and character inherent in the spectacle of children performing adult roles; and in Antonio and Mellida considerable attention is given to this feature of the performance. ¹³

The play begins with an extended Induction in which the boy actors, eight of them, come upon the stage 'with parts in their hands, having cloaks cast over their apparel', and proceed to discuss in detail the requirements of their roles. We are reminded, inevitably, of the written character sketches in the published editions of Jonson's *Every man Out of his Humour* (1599), byt there are several important differences. Most obviously, Marston's 'sketches' are part of the performance - they

contribute an immediate dramatic effect - whereas Jonson's sketches are designed only to be read.

A second difference is that Marston's Induction presents what id genuinely a discussion of roles, not of characters as such. The actors concern themselves explicitly with the practical aspects of their histrionic tasks: some profess themselves 'ignorant in what mold we must cast our actors' (ll.3-4); another despairs of his ability to act the double role of Antonio and the Amazon (65-6, 68-72). The actor who plays Feliche confesses:

'I have a part allotted to me which I have neither able apprehension to conceit nor what I conceit gracious ability to utter.' (*Induction*, 99-101)

The effect of the Induction, I would suggest, is to shift the auditors' attention away from matters of fictional content (or 'substance') towards acting performance. It prepares them for a display of less than perfect impersonations which, by foregrounding the boys' enjoyment, invites a vicariously playful response from the audience.

If the Induction is designed to prepare the audience as a whole for playful recreation, the Prologue addresses itelf exclusively to those 'select and most respected auditors' (3), 'diviner wits' to whose enlightened souls the higher 'intellectual' type of recreation is possible. Such people, it is hoped, will see through the accidental deficiences of performance to the ideal 'conceit' of the work; if not there is still 'entertainment' accessible to all.

In *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, the older play in which Marston had a dominant hand, a variety of techniques were used to promote an 'entertaining' effect (as distinct from naturalistic or strongly empathetic effects): truncated or delayed lines of action; numerous and widely separated crises of action and emotion; ironic framings of potentially serious situations; and, most obviously, playful activities - games and singing, for example - that overrun the boundaries of the fictional diegesis. All of these appear in more pronounced forms in *Antonio and Mellida*. The lines of developing character and action, for example, are unusually disjointed; so much so that G.K.Hunter notes the impossibility of plotting 'any process of organic growth from one attitude to another'.¹⁴

One of the most frequently used techniques in this play is the 'alienation' (in an approximately Brechtian sense) of passionate speeches. Several major characters, including Antonio, his father Andrugio, Mellida, and the villain Piero, are subject to loss of control under the influence of violent passions such as rage and grief. Andrugio, for example, 'falls on the ground' during his opening speech; his son Antonio does the same thing several times (e.g. II,i,200; III,ii,184; IV,i,28); and both he and Piero lapse into incoherent babbling or stuttering. These lapses are not psychological; they signify, rather, a momentary breakdown of the conventions of emotional representation being used by the actors. They refer the audience's attention less to the mental condition of the characters than to the acting limitations of the Boys, and are thus continuous with the concerns expressed in the Induction. The passionate speeches are not thereby rendered absurd (as Caputi and Foakes have suggested) so much as partially alienated from the fictional context and presented to the audience for their pleasure in the In each case, the boy-actor makes his performance directly performance itself. available to the audience for its vicarious and recreative participation.

A question must arise, finally, about the function of *plot* in Marston's plays. If, as is argued here, the dominant dramatic mode is recreational and performance-centred - and if the framing ideology for this mode is one of skepticism about the moral agency of drama - then the ethically persuasive dimension of plot (its tendency, simply, to convey judgments about human conduct by its distribution of rewards and punishments) is a dead letter. But in this and several others of Marston's plays, the 'argument' conveyed by the plot is not a *moral* argument in the usual sense but an endorsement of the value of recreation itself.

Caputi and others have argued, for example, that the Stoic ideal of 'patience' is set forth as the crucial moral ideal in *Antonio and Mellida*. But it might as easily be argued that patience itself is thoroughly discredited by the play: Feliche, the Stoic philosopher, attempts patience and succeeds only in enslaving himself to envy, a worse passion that the ones he imagines he has conquered; Andrugio not only fails three times to suppress his own passions, but finally, in Act IV, exhorts his son to impatient action. Piero, the obvious villain of the piece, is also full of 'impatience' (III,ii,180), but this is his saving grace, the quality that enables him to be part of the joyful conclusion without incongruity. for it is his highly impulsive, volatile temperament that reacts with 'amazement' to Andrugio's entrance and then with an unexpected impulse of mercy towards both his enemies.

The 'thesis' of the play, in other words, is not really about human conduct in the world; it is about human conduct in the theatre when a play by John Marston is being performed! Its message is not 'Be patient in life' - nor, of course, is it 'Be impatient in life'. It is something more like 'Surrender yourself to the impulses of the moment. Enjoy the show!' The advice is not so much moral as procedural.

Of Marston's later plays at least five exhibit the same sort of design and dramaturgy we see exemplified in *Antonio and Mellida*: all of them, that is, are recreative rather than persuasive in their dramatic and rhetorical techniques; most begin with an Induction or Prologue designed to prime the audience for a properly playful response to the performance; and each of them contains an implicit 'argument' exemplifying and recommending those temporary human tendencies and attitudes most likely to interact recreatively with entertaining dramatic elements.

The plot of What You Will, for example, contains no less than three parallel 'conversions to play' - Albano's, Lampatho Doria's and Holofernes Pippo's - and the narrative logic of the threefold action leads to the conclusion that a full surrender to playful impulses is an unreservedly good thing. The amoral simplicity of the argument is perverse only if we only if we assume - wrongly, I believe - that the playwright intended to promulgate desirable attitudes to life rather than a useful relationship to the play.

The Malcontent, Marston's best-known play, admits of a similar analysis, focusing specifically on the sovereign virtues attributed to disguise. Again, the argument makes little sense in ethical terms. Even The Dutch Courtesan, with its apparently serious 'argumentum fabulae' - 'the difference betwixt the love of a courtezan and a wife' - in the end represents 'nothing but passionate man in his slight play'. And The Fawne presents the 'procedural' pattern more clearly than any other of Marston's plays. Joel Kaplan's perceptive analysis of the saturnalian character of this play is vitiated, I think, by precisely his assumption that the 'homeopathic' satire practised by Duke Hercules in the play is being presented as a serious possibility for the reformation of vice in the

world rather than as a metaphor for the auditors' recreative surrender to playful impulse.15

I began this analysis of Marston's aims and methods by alluding to the political atmosphere of fear and insecurity in which poets and playwrights found themselves in turn-of-the century London. If, as I suggested in the first part of this paper, Marston began at this time to develop a rationale and a practice for satire that promised a certain immunity from prosecution, it would seem that he found it so congenial a frame for the odd and interesting kinds of writing he was good at that he retained and elaborated it for the rest of his fairly short writing career. It seems likely that Marston was always less interested in moral heroism than his rival Jonson, and if the theoretical and doctrinal premises of his writing seem to have produced, in the end, surprisingly apolitical and ethically neutral plays, they were probably the necessary conditions for a lively and transgressive form of theatre in an increasingly repressive society.

Patrick Buckridge **School of Humanities Griffith University**

¹Robert Darnton, The Kiss of Lamourette (London: Faber & Faber, 1990); Roger Chartier, The Order of Books trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

³Annabel Patterson, Censorship and Interpretation (Madison, U. of Wisconsin Press, 1984; rpt. 1990); Reading Between the Lines (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁴John Marston, *Poems*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1961), 176. ⁵By, for example, C.S.Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1954), 472-4; A.J. Axelrad, Un malcontent elisabéthain: John Marston (Paris: Didier, 1955), 20-36; and R.W. Ingram, John Marston (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 21-4. A somewhat larger number have taken Marston's word for it. They include: Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Norton, 1932), 177-80; Gustav Cross, 'Marston's Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image: A Mock-Epyllion', Etudes Anglaises 13 (1960), 332-6; Anthony Caputi, John Marston, Satirist (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1961), 14-22; Louis Lecocq, La satire en Angleterre de 1588 à 1603 (Paris, 1969), 433-448; and J. Scott Colley, "Opinion" and the Reader in John Marston's Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image', English Literary Renaissance 3 (1973), 221-231. Philip J. Finkelpearl, 'From Petrarch to Ovid: Metamorphosis in John Marston's Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image, ELH 32 (1965), 333-348 and William Keach, Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe and their Contemporaries (New Jersey: Harvester, 1977), Ch. 6, contrive to have it both ways.

⁶Arnold Davenport, *Collected Poems of Joseph Hall* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1949), p.

⁷The echo of *Venus and Adonis*, Il.199-200 has led some to identify 'Labeo' with Shakespeare.

⁸Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesie*, in Gilbert, pp.415, 413

⁹Caputi, p.71, note 24.

¹⁰Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State and the Profane State*, ed. M.G.Walten, 2 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1938), II, 183.

¹¹This pairing of impediments to 'honest recreation' represents a fairly drastic condensation of several Renaissance commentaries on the subject, in particular those of Vives, Sir John Harington, Burton and John Redford's secular morality Wit and Science. A fuller discussion can be found in my 'Play and recreation in the poems and early dramas of John Marston', unpub. PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1975. UMI 75-24,050.

¹²Introduction to John Marston, Antonio and Mellida, ed G.K.Hunter; Regents Renaissance Drama series (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp.ix-x.

¹³See Jocelyn Powell, 'John Lyly and the Language of Play' in *Elizabethan Theatre*. Stratford-on-Avon

Studies 9 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).

 $^{^{14}}$ Hunter in *Antonio and Mellida*, Introduction, xiii. 15 Joel kaplan, 'John Marston's Fawn: a Saturnalian Satire', *SEL* 9 (1969).